

To: Smith, Paula[Smith.Paula@epa.gov]
From: Gray, David
Sent: Mon 8/10/2015 10:22:45 AM
Subject: NM email

Paula.

Here is a copy of the email NM sent to the congressional members yesterday.

David

All,

Here is an update on where we are right now – I sent this message to EPA Region 6 leaders a few moments ago. One issue where you all can be particularly helpful is to ensure there is a single leader from EPA in control. Region 6 has been responsive and I am working well with Ron Curry. However, Region 8 seems to be having a very difficult time managing this situation. And Region 9 works with the Navajo Nation so they play a role here too. I feel strongly that EPA should not handle this at a regional level – with each region working separately. I think all of the regions need to be heavily involved, but there should be one incident commander leading this effort.

1) **Leadership:** EPA region 6 is now on the scene and we have begun engaging with them. Thank you – we are happy you are here. However, there appears to be a lot of internal communication issues between EPA staff at the regional level. For example, EPA Region 6 staff informed NMED staff during the 9 AM call this morning that they did not have any data and were still waiting for results. However, an hour or so later EPA Region 8 forwarded data to San Juan County, which includes a memo illustrating the data was available on Friday, August 7th. San Juan County (not EPA) then forwarded this data to us. The data we received also suggests EPA Region 8 staff really downplayed the situation at the beginning. EPA needs to put a single person in charge of ALL of their teams – handling this at the regional level is not practical and is resulting in major communication gaps. The release covers multiple jurisdictions (CO, NM, NN), which are all covered by separate regions. There should be one single incident commander leading EPA's efforts. EPA HQ should be actively engaged.

The State of New Mexico wants EPA to assume the lead on this situation as soon as it is in a position to do so. We have mobilized staff from the Environment Department, the State Engineer, the Dep. of Game and Fish, the Department of Agriculture and the Dep. of Homeland Security all jumped on this situation as soon as we were notified of the release. We will continue to use all of our resources to address this as aggressively as possible.

However, our resources are limited and our authority is limited to the area within our jurisdiction (NM). Because EPA has access to much greater resources and is not limited by jurisdictional boundaries, we believe EPA should assume the lead of this entire situation. We will remain highly engaged and provide whatever support EPA requires once it has its incident command center operational.

2) **Communication with Public**: We are all committed to communicating with the public. I am concerned about confusing people by having too many different websites and information portals open. For example, the State and San Juan County both have been sending information out. I understand Region 8 also has a website up and running. I don't think we need to take down any information, but I do think we should have EPA, the State of NM, Navajo Nation, CO, and San Juan County all on the same page in terms of communications so that we are distributing as much information as possible to the public in a manner that is consistent, transparent and accessible to all. The State and the County are working together on communications, and we are also both working with the Navajo Nation. However, we need to get everyone on the same page with respect to our communication plans immediately and constantly push information out to the public until this situation is under control. We should also schedule another public meeting within the next 2 days.

Sent from my iPhone